MEETING MINUTES FROM: August 18, 2025

Council called to order in regular session at 7:00 p.m. with Mayor Matthew Shanahan presiding. Opening ceremony: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mayor Shanahan. Roll call of members: Brenda Mackey, here; Connie Mehring, here; Mark Smith, here; Robert Bergfeld, absent at roll call, but arrived at 7:08 p.m.; Lincoln Fox, absent at roll call, but arrived at 7:14 p.m.; Paul Neal, here. Also present was Fiscal Officer/Utilities Clerk Ryan Harnishfeger. Visitors attending: Brian Owens, with utility questions; Nigel Tussing, regarding large wasps at the park. Minutes from the August 4th meeting were approved as submitted.

FINANCE and CLAIMS: A spreadsheet of the current invoices was reviewed and approved by members. Councilwoman Mehring made a motion that these bills be allowed and orders drawn for same. Councilman Smith seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

Mayor Shanahan did a third reading, by title only, of Ordinance #987-25, AN ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR THE COST AND EXPENSE OF PROVIDING FOR THE REMOVAL AND SPECIAL TREATMENT OF SHADE TREES FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONTROLLING THE BLIGHT AND DISEASE OF SAME; AND FOR PLANTING, MAINTAINING, TRIMMING AND REMOVING SHADE TREES IN AND ALONG THE STREETS AND WITHIN THE PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY OF THE VILLAGE. The mayor commented that the assessment amount for tax year 2026 will be \$5,000. Councilwoman Mackey made a motion to adopt Ordinance #987-25. Councilman Neal seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

Mayor Shanahan did a third reading, by title only, of Ordinance #988-25, AN ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR THE COST AND EXPENSE OF THE LIGHTING OF THE STREETS, ALLEYS, WAYS, AND OTHER PUBLIC PLACES OF THE VILLAGE OF TONTOGANY. The mayor commented that the assessment amount for tax year 2026 will be \$4,000. Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt Ordinance #988-25. Councilman Neal seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

Mayor Shanahan did a third reading, by title only, of Ordinance #989-25, AN ORDINANCE TO WAIVE RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS OF THE FISCAL OFFICER. Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt Ordinance #989-25. Councilman Neal seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

Mayor Shanahan reported that we received an official document from Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Lieutenant Governor Jim Tressel, recognizing EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT RECOGNITION DAY on the 15th day of August, 2025. He made the document available for any members who wished to look at it, and he said it would be put with the other proclamations received for the 150th Celebration.

Mayor Shanahan invited Brian Owens to speak to Council. Mr. Owens expressed his concern that a lot of the Village's utility customers may suffer unexpected high bills, as a result of estimates being done for several months on meters, due to meter reading equipment problems. He urged that the equipment must be updated to work properly and give real readings. He noted that his bill has been estimated for four months, while he has done a pool fill and used more electricity to deal with the unusually hot weather. He said he was concerned that he might get a \$1,000 bill when real readings are taken again and the real usage is ascertained. He said he thought a lot of other utility customers might have similar situations. He said he wanted an explanation more than anything, and he suggested that maybe a letter of explanation could be sent to all of the utility customers. Councilman Smith responded that we have discussed the equipment problems at previous meetings and there are upgrades that Utilities Clerk Harnishfeger is also working on to bring our dated computer and software up to date. He said he understood that we should be ready to use the new meter reading equipment and software for September billing, Mr. Harnishfeger concurred that we should be ready to read water and electric meters with the new equipment in September. Mr. Owens commented that you may have many unhappy customers who get a high bill that they can't pay. Mr. Harnishfeger responded that not all customers were totally estimated like Mr. Owens, because Meter Reader Johnson went out and manually read most of the meters in July and August to give

customers real readings. Councilwoman Mackey commented that her meter had a real reading last month and it was a lot higher. She added that it will probably be that way for everyone due to the hot summer we have had. Mr. Owens pointed out that there are grants and low-interest loans available to help water utilities get their meters and their whole system up to date. He mentioned Rural Water as a source for technical assistance. Mayor Shanahan asked if Mr. Owens had specific information about where to look for the low-interest loans. Mr. Owens answered that it would be government loans. He added that someone like TMACOG might be able to help with that. Mr. Smith asked Mr. Owens if he had any other suggestions regarding water and electric. Mr. Owens answered that his experience is mainly with water. He commented that water meters become inaccurate after many years and don't show the full usage. He explained that to change out a large number of old water meters in pits might require hiring a company to come in and do it, using special methods to shut off water lines during the replacement of meters, which would be expensive. He added that you may need to increase your rates to cover costs, but you could send a letter to your customers, explaining that it will be less expensive for them than if the water utilities have to be taken over by someone like Northwestern Water & Sewer District. Mr. Smith commented that we are looking at hiring a new utility billing clerk, and we will also be moving to a new utility billing system because of our outdated software. Councilman Neal added that our current utility software, Fundbalance, will no longer be supported after the end of 2026. The mayor asked Mr. Owens to text us some contact information for someone who can help us get a better understanding about meter upgrades and what all is involved. Mr. Owens said he would give him contact information for Perrysburg's supplier. Mr. Owens asked Mr. Harnishfeger how many customers Tontogany has. Mr. Harnishfeger answered that there are about 330 to 350 accounts. With nothing more to discuss, the mayor and members thanked Mr. Owens and he left the meeting.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger reported that he received a letter from Joyce Hay of Portage Michigan, with a check for \$300, apologizing that her Chief Tondoganie presentation at the festival caused damage to the paint on the west wall of the hall in three small spots. She said she hoped the \$300 would cover the cost, but to let her know if anything more is needed to make it right. Mr. Harnishfeger said he thought the \$300 was way too much for the damage done, but he asked members to look at the wall and let him know if they wanted him to simply return Ms. Hay's check to her, or what, if anything, to charge her. Councilwoman Mackey commented that Ms. Hay was doing a service for the village. Members agreed. Ms. Mackey said that it was not a big deal and that she and Ron will just come in and touch up the spots, as well as the spot found behind the picture on the east wall. Mayor Shanahan told Mr. Harnishfeger to return the check to Ms. Hay and tell her that we appreciate her honesty, but she was providing a service to the town. He added that if she turns around and says to put it in as a donation for the event, then that is her decision and we would not say no to that.

ZONING: Councilwoman Mehring reported that her neighbor hasn't paid the zoning fee for putting up their fence. Mayor Shanahan responded that he thought Zoning Inspector Johnson had said that he received that payment. Ms. Mehring asserted that he had not received the payment yet. Councilman Smith suggested that we send Mr. Johnson a text message to follow up on this. Councilman Fox asked what the protocol is when we notice that something is an issue that needs addressed under zoning. The mayor answered that, if he himself is alerted about a zoning issue, or if a resident asks him a zoning question directly, he typically sends the issue or refers the resident to Zoning Inspector Johnson, since he has the knowledge of how zoning matters should be handled. Then, typically, Mr. Johnson replies that he will stop out and talk to the person with the zoning issue, who may not have realized that they needed a zoning permit for something they have done or are wanting to do. Mr. Fox asked if it is just a form that they fill out. The mayor responded that a form is filled out, on which Mr. Johnson creates a map of the location of the zoning item on the property, such as the addition of a shed or a fence. Mr. Fox asked what we would do if a person refuses to pay the zoning permit fee. The mayor answered that the zoning

inspector reports at meetings on zoning permits issued and fees collected, to keep Council up to date on the status of zoning issues; and the fiscal officer enters the zoning receipts into the accounting software. Councilwoman Mackey advised members that, if they see a structure going up and wonder if the property owner has obtained a zoning permit for it, it is perfectly fine to text Mr. Johnson to alert him about it, in case he hasn't been made aware of it. Mr. Fox asked again what happens if someone refuses to pay the zoning fee. The mayor responded that he would hope that most people wouldn't argue over a \$25 permit fee, but, if they did, we would turn it over to our attorney. Ms. Mehring asked about how tall a fence can be. The mayor answered that we may or may not have anything in Village zoning code that addresses the height of a fence, but, if not, we can refer to what the Ohio Basic Code says about it. Councilman Neal added that we pass an ordinance every year, saying that we are adopting the Ohio Basic Code. The mayor commented that we can use the Ohio Basic Code as our authority to deal with infractions of that code. He credited Mr. Neal for bringing the Ohio Basic Code option to our attention, which we hadn't previously been utilizing. He also reminded members that Mr. Neal had marked specific topics in the Ohio Basic Code book that cover recurring issues we may need to deal with. Mr. Neal commented that the next step we need to take is to make Village zoning code more accessible to us with cross-referencing, because we currently have no way of quickly finding what our code says about specific zoning issues. The mayor responded that we could save ourselves some money in attorney fees by putting more effort into having a system of finding code we need, rather than turning it over to the attorney to search for the code for us. Mr. Neal added that Mr. Johnson has a copy of the Ohio Basic Code with marked cross-referencing to issues that have come up before Council again and again. The mayor commented that our zoning does say that you have to have a deck or a fence around a pool, but it does not define what that fence has to look like; so, a lot is left open to personal preference, including the height of a fence.

UTILITIES: Mayor Shanahan reported that Utilities Superintendent Johnson sent him a text, saying that it was a rough month getting ready for the Ohio EPA survey, and that he would be skipping tonight's meeting in order to celebrate his son's birthday. Mr. Johnson also said that he would get back to the schedule of attending the first meeting of each month. He also wanted everyone to know that the survey went well, he doesn't have to get master-meter readings every day, and the survey is behind us now for the next three years.

Utilities Clerk Harnishfeger reported that, after approval at the last meeting, he placed an order for the new 64GB/2TB HP EliteBook 860 G11 Windows 11 Pro business laptop computer for utility billing. He said he purchased the one he had shown them for \$1,449, rather than the one suggested from an alternate Amazon vendor for \$1,349.99, because the less expensive version was advertised as "[Upgraded] Seal is opened for Hardware/Software upgrade only to enhance performance." He said he didn't want a unit that someone got into and did unknown alterations, and, if Council thought he made a wrong decision, he would be willing to pay the extra \$100 himself. Members voiced no opposition to his decision. Mr. Harnishfeger continued to say that he received the computer in two days and then called Tyler Tech and talked with Software Support Specialist Christine Whitney to let her know that we had the new computer and would like to schedule a migration of Fundbalance from the old computer in two weeks. Ms. Whitney told him to go ahead and finish August billing on the old computer and then on Monday, August 11th (well ahead of the normal two-week wait) she would get with him remotely to do the migration to the new computer. The migration was completed on August 11th and then he contacted Sensus Technician Grant Conwell at Core & Main to schedule him to come back to install AutoRead on the new computer and get it communicating with our new Archer 4 handheld meter reader. Mr. Conwell is scheduled to come tomorrow, August 19th, to do that, after which Meter Reader Johnson will be able to use the handheld to do meter readings for September billing. So, we are ahead of schedule in this process (especially due to Christine Whitney's gracious offer to help us get Fundbalance migrated quicker than the normal two-week wait).

STREETS and ALLEYS: Nothing to report.

SIDEWALKS and TREES: Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger reported that he received a call from Dennis Hafner on August 5th, saying he and a neighbor on Crom Street had suffered a power outage since the middle of the night and it was just back to low voltage now. Bowling Green Electric Superintendent John Stewart stopped in at the office to let us know that he was working on the power outage on Crom Street and he said there was a problem with tree limbs in the wires. He requested that Mr. Harnishfeger let Council know that limbs need to be trimmed back from the power lines. Mr. Harnishfeger said he asked if he meant just at the Crom Street location, to which Mr. Stewart replied that they needed trimmed back all over the village. Councilman Smith commented that he assumed he was talking about the lines from the distribution poles to the houses. Mr. Harnishfeger replied that, if not certain, we would need to ask Mr. Stewart what lines he was talking about. Mayor Shanahan commented that the issue was with a pole behind the house, not out on the street. Mr. Smith related that he had a similar situation a few years ago. In the utility alley are overhead lines feeding a pole between his and his neighbor's back yards, from which it splits off, one line to him and one line to his neighbor. A tree branch rubbed through a cable and they lost a leg of their power. Mr. Smith reminded members that we have talked about this before. The lines we are talking about here are not the transmission lines for which we need to bring in a company like Pennline to do the trimming; they are lines to people's homes where branches from trees in their yards are rubbing the lines. The mayor commented that Dennis Hafner had texted him about their power problem on August 4th and said it seemed to be problems at the pole behind their house. The mayor said he sent the information he got from Mr. Hafner to Mr. Johnson, who said he would contact BG Electric. By the next day, August 5th, Mr. Hafner and the apartments next door were still experiencing problems with the electric. After it was fixed, the mayor said he asked Mr. Hafner what turned out to be the problem, to which he replied that something came apart at the pole. The mayor added that it wasn't a pole in the utility alley but a pole in between two yards. Councilwoman Mehring asked if it was our trees or the owner's trees. The mayor answered that it would be the owner's trees. Ms. Mehring asserted that if the tree causing problems is in the owner's yard then they have to take care of it. Mr. Smith reminded members that we had talked with Solicitor Skaff a couple of years ago about that, and he had said it was the property owner's responsibility to trim their problem-causing trees back. Mr. Smith suggested that we may want to put out a letter to property owners to educate them and urge them to get their limbs trimmed back from the wires before it turns into an issue. Councilman Fox added that we could recommend tree trimming companies. Mr. Smith gave a brief explanation of how electric is set up in Tontogany, with lines running the length of the utility alley in back that serve the whole neighborhood. From there it feeds a pole on the property line in the back yard of the houses, from which it splits off in a Y, serving two homes. He commented that in a more modern setup they would bury it from the pole in the alley and just bury two lines to the homes. The mayor said that he could work with Mr. Johnson on a letter or postcard as a friendly reminder to property owners about the need for trimming.

Councilwoman Mackey reported that we still have logs in front of Peinert's that are up for grabs. Mayor Shanahan said he would take a picture of them on his way home and put a "free fire wood" post it on social media.

DRAINS and SEWERS: Nothing to report.

CITY HALL and PARKS: Councilman Smith praised everyone for a good job on Togany Fest. Councilman Fox asked what was the plan for the sand from the sand sculpture. Mayor Shanahan replied that the original plan for the sand was that he had offered it to the other three Otsego villages. Grand Rapids expressed interest in taking some for sandbags when they have flooding, but their administrator came over and

looked at it and it is not the right kind of sand, because they use a gravel-sand mix. The mayor said he texted Weston and Haskins and told them the sand is good to go, but they have not responded. He suggested that we could post on social media that we have some free sand for anyone who wants some for a sandbox or something. At some point we may make a decision on whatever is left to just spread it out in the grass. Mr. Fox asked if the sand was donated. The mayor responded that it was. Mr. Fox asked if we might want to contact the person who donated it and ask if they want it. The mayor answered that he didn't think Sandman would want it back. Mr. Smith added that it would cost them more to come and pick it up than it is worth.

Mayor Shanahan reported that Steve Powell had asked if we could use some of the remaining 150th fundraiser money to bring someone in to touch up the mural on his building downtown. Councilman Fox asked how much 150th surplus money we had left. Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger responded that we had a difference of \$2,547.03 of 150th proceeds left after expenses. Mr. Fox said he didn't know how far that would go as far as mural costs. The mayor added that the question is if it can be touched up and if it would cost more to touch it up or have a new mural put on the building. Mr. Fox suggested asking the school if they would do it as an art project. Councilwoman Mackey commented that the City of Bowling Green has recently had a lot of murals done. The mayor added that Grand Rapids has done some too. He said maybe we could ask for someone from their arts council to give us recommendations or look at ours and give us a professional opinion. Councilman Smith commented that Gail Christofferson is very connected to the Grand Rapids Arts Council.

Councilman Fox reported that he was in Fremont one day and in their downtown section they have a really cool amphitheater. He said he thought that the area behind our village hall would be a perfect location for something like that, where we could host live entertainment or some kind of stage (since we didn't have a stage for the Togany Fest event). He said he didn't know how much something like that would cost, but maybe we could apply our leftover 150th funds to it. He said he would stop down there in Fremont, take some pictures, and send them to everyone, so the mayor and members have an idea of what he is talking about. He said it might utilize the space behind the hall for more than just a grassy field. He added that we might want to do a scaled-down version of what is in Fremont. He said it would be useful, especially if we have a community that is obviously interested in outdoor plays, presentations, and live music. Councilman Neal commented that it would be nice if something like that could be incorporated into the downtown area, which could add incentive to the downtown property owners. Mr. Fox suggested that there could be a once-a-month open mic night for local talent to come and sing or play their instrument or whatever.

Mayor Shanahan reported, with regard to downtown business/revitalization, that Doc's Rib Cage has hit the market and is up for sale. The plan is to stay open while it is on the market. The mayor said he received a text from the realtor asking if he knew of anyone who is interested in purchasing Doc's, and he responded that he didn't. He said they are asking \$250,000 and everything comes with it, such as the equipment, the license, the building, as well as the ribs recipe. The mayor asked members to let him know if they know of anyone who might be interested. Councilman Fox responded that he talks to a lot of people in that line of work.

Mayor Shanahan said he echoed Councilman Smith's praise to everyone for a great job on Togany Fest. He said the 150th Committee was extremely satisfied with how the 150th activities went. Councilman Fox and other members voiced praise for the work of the 150th Committee and said they should be proud of themselves. The mayor reported that they had over 600 people for the three showings of the Murder Mystery. They served over 225 people at the pancake breakfast. 16 runners signed up for the 5K, but we had almost 40. He said the parade was the biggest one he has ever seen at Togany Fest. Councilman Smith commented that the historic trolly tour was super successful. The mayor added that it was standing room only on the trolly, and people who couldn't get on it sat at the church for an hour to make sure they got on the next trolly tour. They added an extra tour at 5:00 p.m., so the 150th Committee and a few other

people still wanting to go on the tour could do so. There was a wonderful historical open house, which included a book from the Civil War. Mr. Smith commented that 75 people watched the Documentary. The mayor said the fireworks show was easily one of his top three favorite things. He estimated that the fireworks were worth \$20,000 if we had to pay full price, but we only had to pay \$3,000. Councilwoman Mehring commented that they were really worth \$30,000, due to some extra leftovers from another event that were added in.

Mayor Shanahan invited Nigel Tussing, who arrived at 7:55 p.m., to address Council. Mr. Tussing said he lived just outside of town, but he brings his kids to play at Centennial Park. He said he wanted Council to know that there is a big ground hornet problem there. Mayor Shanahan asked if he was talking about the large cicada killer wasps that nest in the ground, and he agreed that he was talking about giant brown wasps in the sand area. He said his wife adamantly wanted him to inform Council about the wasps, which terrify the children. The mayor told him that the good news is that, although those wasps are intimidating, they are not likely to attack or sting. He told Mr. Tussing to let his wife know that the problem will be addressed. With nothing more to discuss, the mayor thanked Mr. Tussing and he left the meeting. Members discussed ways to get rid of the wasps. Councilwoman Mackey told members that she has them near her front door. She said they have used a granular product in May for two years, which is supposed to kill them, but it has only lessened them and they still get a few. She added that everything she has read says to pour water down their nest, because they hate being flooded out. She said she has tried pouring boiling water down the nest and wasp and hornet sprays, but what they do is just dig another nest. Councilman Bergfeld said he saw them at the ball field. Members mentioned possibly mulching over certain areas or planting grass, but they acknowledged that the wasps would build nests anywhere there is sand. Ms. Mackey wondered if we could find a company that could professionally spray to get rid of the wasps. Councilman Smith responded that you have to spray them directly to kill them. Councilman Fox told members that there is a company that the state uses for general things like this. He said he asked about dealing with things like flying wasps and the gentleman recommended a powder that you place around the outside of the nest. The wasps get the powder on them and take in into the nest, which kills them and the other wasps in the nest. The mayor suggested that Mr. Fox might try to find out what the powder is.

Councilman Neal reminded members of the suggestion made earlier in the meeting that we need to let our customers know what is going on with the utility billing system. He said he thought that we should write a letter to the customers about our meter reading situation and our plan to upgrade the utility software and so forth, to let them know what is going on and what is our plan. Councilman Fox asked what members thought about having an open-forum meeting or special meeting. Councilman Smith responded that every meeting we have is open to the public, and Mr. Harnishfeger takes excellent minutes to report the content of each meeting. Mr. Fox commented that somebody might have a suggestion that we are not thinking about. Mr. Neal commented that a town hall could be useful, but you have to understand that you have to manage that meeting. He suggested that we let people know what is the plan and invite them to come to discuss it. Mayor Shanahan commented that a letter might be good, for now, to explain things like why meter readings had to be estimated and that property owners need to trim back their tree limbs from service lines. Then, if we decide to raise utility rates, at that time we could hold a town hall to explain why we need to raise the rates and to explain the big picture about the future of our utility billing system. The mayor emphasized the point Mr. Neal had made that we would have to manage a town hall meeting, as they have notoriously been known to get out of control. Mr. Smith commented that this goes back to the point he was making earlier that Mr. Harnishfeger produces excellent minutes and a lot of people in town read those minutes; and we have regular meetings that are absolutely open to the public every other week. He added that he invites and highly encourages all of our neighbors to show up and be a part of the discussion; he wants input from people so we aren't making decisions in a vacuum. He commented that we have it good because people aren't getting upset with us,

but we do have an open forum here where we are happy to discuss issues with our neighbors. Mr. Neal said he thinks that we do have a plan that we are following and when you do something like this you will have some people who agree and other people who disagree. He suggested that we have a friendly meeting to let them know of our plans. Mr. Fox commented that our hand is forced in a lot of this; there are changes that we have to make because there is no other option. The mayor commented that there may be people who disagree or are upset, but, if they can get a little better understanding, that is all they are seeking for.

Councilman Neal reported that he had put together some information about the proposed sidewalk from the hall to the railroad tracks. He commented that everything in the state has laws in the form of code, and then there are departments that write rules. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) happens to be the department that writes the rules for railroad crossings, and they have several pages about pedestrian crossings at railroad tracks. From ODOT's information, Mr. Neal said he determined that we have a very legal pedestrian crossing on the west side of the tracks and we have a very illegal pedestrian crossing on the east side of the tracks, because it is nonexistent. He then passed around some copies of information he had compiled in a REQUEST TO COMPLETE THE VILLAGE HALL SIDEWALK TO DOWNTOWN, with attached photographs. Since there weren't copies enough for the mayor and each member, Mayor Shanahan asked Councilman Neal to email copies to everyone. Mr. Neal explained that in his information he shows the crossing and where and how the second half of the sidewalk should be placed, essentially copying the sidewalk on the other side. White lines should be painted on either side of the walkway over the road, clearly identifying the pedestrian walkway. He reminded members that this is an approved project on our 2025 appropriations, and he said it should be on our to-do list at the very least. Mr. Neal reminded members that there had been a question about what goes in between the tracks; he remarked that that has been solved, as there is already asphalt between the tracks where the crossing should be. Councilwoman Mehring commented that there used to be a sidewalk there, but it got covered over or torn out by the railroad people. Mr. Neal responded that he checked the area out thoroughly and there is no sidewalk there now. Councilman Fox commented that the next step would be figuring out who to contact to make this happen. Councilman Smith responded that any concrete contractor would be able to do it. Members discussed the dimensions of the 44 feet of sidewalk needed, as well as legal requirements for construction, and Mr. Smith estimated that it would cost two or three thousand dollars and would be a quick two-day project for somebody. Mr. Fox commented that we want to make sure it is handicap-accessible too. Mr. Neal stated that there are various types of crossings and certain rules apply to each type of crossing. Mr. Smith responded that any contractor will be familiar with the rules and will know what we need for this particular situation. He added that we can make some phone calls and send out some emails to see if anyone is interested in submitting an estimate for the project and see what their timeline is.

Councilwoman Mackey asked about the status of banners. Mayor Shanahan answered that the gentleman hasn't responded to him, but he would email him again. Ms. Mackey said she had one name to add for next year: Lyle Hill.

With nothing further to discuss, Mayor Shanahan declared the meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Matthew Shanahan, Mayor

Ryan Harnishfeger, Fiscal Officer